

<p style="text-align: center;">Pennsylvania eFOTG - Section III</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Planning and Compliance Information</p>
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General

Conservation planners need to become familiar with NRCS planning policy (General Manual 180, Part 409), the National Planning Procedures Handbook, program manuals, discipline manuals and handbooks (agronomy, biology, economics, engineering, water quality, cultural resources, environmental compliance, etc.), the Pennsylvania electronic Field Office Technical Guide (eFOTG), and approved automated planning tools. In addition, users need to be familiar with NRCS environmental compliance policy (General Manual 190, Part 410) for the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and other applicable federal, state and local laws, regulations, and executive orders.

Quality Criteria

Quality Criteria, described in PA eFOTG – Section III, are quantitative or qualitative statements of treatment levels needed to maintain or improve natural resources. Minimum quality criteria have been established for each of the primary resource concerns likely to be encountered in Pennsylvania. They are established in accordance with federal, state and, where applicable, local programs, laws and regulations, in consideration of ecological, economic, and social effects. Additional concerns identified during the planning process can be added to these minimum criteria.

The use and implementation of these criteria will be consistent with federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

Resource Management Systems (RMS)

A Resource Management System (RMS) is achieved when treatment has been planned that, when applied, will resolve all of the identified resource concerns in the quality criteria. The RMS will be considered applied when all of the conservation practices that make up the system have been installed according to conservation practice standards in Section IV of the Pennsylvania eFOTG, or when other management has been done to resolve resource concerns.

A Resource Management System (RMS) is the minimum level of management needed to maintain or improve natural resources and address environmental protection laws and regulations applicable in Pennsylvania. Landusers are encouraged to improve resources by going beyond the minimum levels of management described in the RMS.

The RMS does not require active management or full use of resources according to their capability, if resources are not being degraded and no legal violations are occurring.

The Environmental Evaluation Worksheet can be used to document whether or not current and planned resource conditions meet quality criteria. It can be used for individual fields, groups of similar fields, or entire properties, as appropriate.

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Alternative Conservation Systems (ACS) - (see *PA ACS Guidelines*, PA eFOTG – Section III)

The purpose of an Alternative Conservation System (ACS) is to treat soil erosion on cropland to achieve a substantial reduction in soil loss. This is the minimum level of conservation treatment that a USDA program participant must implement on Highly Erodible Land (HEL) to meet USDA conservation compliance requirements. This will preserve eligibility of the person for USDA program benefits. The ACS may or may not reduce soil erosion to the tolerable soil loss level "T" and should not be assumed to meet other state and federal laws and regulations pertaining to soil erosion and sedimentation control.

Other Levels of Conservation Planning and Management

These quality criteria can be used to help meet requirements of programs, laws and regulations that require treatment of specific resource concerns that are less than a complete RMS, for example, to meet federal Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan requirements.

Human Considerations

In addition the five natural resources (Soil, Water, Air, Plants, Animals), human considerations include economic and social aspects. These guidelines are designed as a checklist for planners to consider the human aspects in formulating and evaluating plans and management systems.

A. Economics

1. Cost Effectiveness of the planned system.
2. Financial condition of the landuser.
3. Availability of markets for products produced.
4. Level of management skills, land, labor, material and equipment required for the system to function.
5. Interest of the landuser in participating in USDA or other programs.
6. Long-term sustainability of the operation.

B. Social Considerations

1. Public Health and Safety: local community standards regarding public health and safety are followed.
2. Values: Social, family and religious values and society goals are considered.
3. Client Characteristics: Client characteristics, including age, planning horizon, special emphasis groups, and resources, are considered.
4. Risk Tolerance/Aversion: The degree of risk is reasonable compared to the alternatives.
5. Tenure: Tenure of time available does not affect the ability to install, manage or maintain the system.

Environmental Evaluation (see *EE Worksheet*, PA eFOTG – Section III)

An Environmental Evaluation Worksheet (Pennsylvania substitute for NRCS-CPA-52) must be completed in conjunction with all USDA-NRCS assisted conservation planning and implementation activities.